

Appendix A

Report to:	Cabinet
Date of meeting:	20 March 2025
Title of Report:	Devolution Consultation Response
By:	Chief Executive
Purpose:	To consider the Council's response to the Government's Consultation on Establishing a Mayoral Combined County Authority across East Sussex, West Sussex and Brighton and Hove.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Cabinet is recommended to:

- 1) approve in principle the response to the Consultation set out at Appendix 2; and**
 - 2) delegate to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader authority to finalise the response for submission to Government.**
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1. Background

1.1. On 16 December 2024, the Government published its English Devolution White Paper which set out its ambitions in relation to Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation. The Government's clearly stated preference was for all parts of the country to eventually have a Mayoral Strategic Authority. Having established the Council of Nations and Regions and the Mayoral Council, the Government's policy places Mayors "front and centre" as fundamental partners to the Government. Set out in the White Paper was an intention to invite a number of places to join the Government's Devolution Priority Programme. These places would be those that are ready to achieve mayoral devolution at pace.

1.2. Cabinet received a report on 9 January 2025 setting out the position of the Government and recommending that the Council apply to join the Devolution Priority Programme. A number of potential advantages which could benefit the residents and businesses of the County were set out, including:

- Having a Mayor elected by 2026, which is the earliest point,
- Having access to the Mayoral Strategic Authority level of the framework (as set out in the White Paper),
- Taking a seat at the Council of the Nations and the Regions/Mayoral Council to feed into national policy making,
- Starting the clock on getting to Established status, which requires a Mayor being in place for 18 months, which if reached, unlocks the single settlement, and
- Backing from government, including Ministerial support and engagement to meet timescales for May 2026 and capacity funding to start flowing the year before the election.

1.3 On 9 January 2025 following a debate at Full Council the Cabinet agreed that East Sussex County Council (ESCC) should apply to be part of the Devolution Priority Programme. On 5 February 2025 the Government confirmed that Sussex was one of the 6 areas nationally that had been successful in their application. The Government has indicated that it is minded to establish a "Mayoral Combined County Authority for Sussex and Brighton". There is a statutory process that has to be followed which includes seeking local views to inform the final decision by Government. The Government therefore launched a consultation on 17 February which will run until 13 April 2025. A copy of the consultation document is at

Appendix 1 and summarised below. The consultation document can also be viewed via: [Sussex and Brighton devolution consultation - GOV.UK](#)

1.4 In deciding whether to establish the Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA) the Government will need to decide whether:

- a) They consider that the establishment of a Combined County Authority in the area is likely to improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of some or all of the people in the area;
- b) Establishing a Combined County Authority in the area is appropriate having regard to the need to:
 - Secure effective and convenient local government; and,
 - Reflect the identities and interests of local communities.

1.5 Should the Government decide to proceed, the consent of the Councils will be required following which legislation will be introduced to establish the Combined County Authority and make provision for the election of a Mayor. The Government has expressed an intention for the Combined County Authority to begin work delivering local priorities from when it is established and therefore the legislation giving effect to its establishment will also confer some transport and economic regeneration functions. Thereafter, the Government will introduce an English Devolution Bill with a view to establishing a statutory framework that automatically confers all the functions that are set out in the Devolution Framework (which are explained in Section 3 of the consultation document at Appendix 1).

2. The Consultation Document

2.1. The consultation document sets out the proposed institutional, governance and decision-making arrangements. In particular it proposes that the MCCA covers the local authority areas of “East Sussex, West Sussex and Brighton” and is formally known as the “*Sussex and Brighton Combined County Authority*”.

2.2. The Constituent Councils will be East Sussex County Council, West Sussex County Council, and Brighton and Hove City Council, with each council appointing 2 representatives (and the same number of substitutes). The document proposes that there will be 6 constituent council members in total. It is unclear what the position would be if following Local Government Reorganisation there are more than 3 unitaries across the area, (although the consultation document sets out that the governance and decision-making arrangements within the Combined Authority will be updated to reflect any changes needed). The Mayor will be a constituent member and would exercise the mayoral functions outlined in the Devolution Framework on behalf of the MCCA, and will be required to appoint a Deputy.

2.3. The consultation paper sets out that the Constituent Authorities will be able to appoint a maximum of 6 non constituent and associated members. Examples of such members would be a district or borough council (who under the relevant legislation cannot be a full constituent member), local NHS Trust, the Police and Crime Commissioner or a local registered provider and authorities. Associated members are named individuals who can provide particular experience or expertise e.g. on active travel or local business. Non constituent members (but not associated members) can be given voting rights at the discretion of the Combined County Authority.

2.4. It is proposed that no decisions can be made at a meeting unless the Mayor (or Deputy) and at least 4 constituent members are present. All members would have a single vote. Decisions would be approved by a simple majority in favour, including the Mayor.

2.5. The Authority will have at least one Overview and Scrutiny Committee and one Audit Committee.

2.6. The consultation document sets out a summary of the powers and functions that will be available which reflect those set out in the White Paper and are summarised in the Devolution Framework Summary Table in Annex A of the consultation document at Appendix 1.

Funding

2.7 It is proposed that the MCCA would receive devolved funding from central government with a view to giving the MCCA control over how funding was spent to best meet local need. This includes funding relating to:

- Housing and regeneration,
- Local Growth,
- Adult Skills (except apprenticeships), and
- Local transport.

2.8 The MCCA would also receive a 30-year “Investment Fund” from central government. The amount of this fund will be confirmed at the Government’s Spending Review in June 2025. The consultation document sets out that this will be a flexible fund, with locally set priorities, to drive economic growth. The 30-year period is to give certainty when local leaders make investment decisions and will be a mix of revenue and capital spending.

2.9 The Authority will also be able to raise a precept to raise money for local priorities. To help establish the MCCA there will be capacity funding from the Government, and we await details in relation to this.

Transport and local infrastructure

2.10 The consultation paper sets out that the MCCA would become the Local Transport Authority for the area, becoming responsible for public transport services instead of upper tier local authorities as is the currently the case.

- **Bus and active travel** - The MCCA will play a key role in relation to buses and active travel having the power to work with bus operators to set a vision for services across the whole of the area; the MCCA will award contracts for buses in their area which can be used to determine routes, timetables, fares and branding and could establish publicly owned bus companies. The MCCA would be expected to produce plans, with timescales, to decarbonise and reduce air pollution from the bus fleet.

Active Travel England would support the MCCA to ensure a consistent approach to safety and accessibility for all users by increasing capability and addressing skills gaps.

- **Rail** – the Government intends that the Mayor will have a statutory role in governing, managing, planning and developing the rail network, embedding the voice of their community in decisions of the rail network. Mayors will be given the ability to capitalise on opportunities around local rail stations. This may include regenerating the areas around the station, working up different forms of transport or building homes.

The MCCA will have an important role in engaging with the Department of Transport on its national rail planning process, and will collaborate with the Government to deliver ambitions on ticketing such as building on existing pay as you go pilots.

- **Roads** – Responsibilities for local roads would remain with the relevant council, but the MCCA will play a key coordination role in the local road network, working with National Highways and the council.

The MCCA would establish and coordinate a Key Road Network (KRN) on behalf of the Mayor. This KRN would be made up of locally important roads across the area and enable them to be managed in a strategic manner. The intention being to reduce congestion, improve traffic flow and introduce bus priority or cycle infrastructure across the area. The Mayor will also be given the power to be able to require a constituent council to use their road in a way that is consistent with the KRN.

The Government is considering devolving approval of local Lane Rental schemes to MCCAs. Councils would therefore seek approval from the MCCA to charge rather than the Department of Transport.

Skills and Employment Support

2.11 The ambition for the MCCA is to tailor training and support for adults in the area, having regard to local priorities and available jobs. This would be underpinned by devolved adult skills funding and functions from Department for Education and the devolution of future “supported employment” funding from the Department of Work and Pensions, which is intended to help those with disabilities, health problems and more complex barriers to find a suitable job and sustain work.

2.12 Alongside this, it is intended to give the MCCA a role in co-designing any future national employment support programme that is additional to the core work of Jobcentre Plus.

2.13 The MCCA would, with Employer Representative Bodies, take joint ownership of the Local Skills Improvement Plan, which is intended to set the strategic direction for skills provision helping lead to good quality employment opportunities for 16-19 year-olds in the area.

2.14 It would also be the role of the MCCA to produce, for its area, a local Get Britain Working Plan, focused on reducing economic activity and driving integration between national and local health work and skills provision.

Housing and Strategic Planning

2.15 The MCCA is stated as being integral to the Government meeting its commitment of delivering 1.5 million new homes in this Parliament. The MCCA would be given control of funding to support regeneration and housing delivery, have a strategic place partnership with Homes England and have powers to drive regeneration in the area, such as the power to establish statutory bodies to deliver regeneration schemes.

2.16 The MCCA with the Mayor would be empowered to deliver and propose Spatial Development Strategies (SDS) and will have the power to “call in” planning applications of “strategic importance”. It is not yet clear what impact what this will have on the local authority’s current responsibilities. The consultation document envisages that these powers will enable the Mayor to scrutinise the most significant planning proposals to support the SDS. The Mayor will also have the ability to impose a “Mayoral Community Levy”, the revenue of which will help deliver local infrastructure.

Economic development and regeneration

2.17 It is proposed that the MCCA plays a crucial role in attracting international investment for the area. To achieve this the Authority will:

- Take lead responsibility for managing and focussing local programmes that provide businesses with support and advice,
- Host the Local Growth Hub (part of the national Business Growth Service - tailored for the needs of the area),
- Form a strategic partnership with the Department for Business and Trade to align national and local policy making,
- Work in partnership with businesses and universities, with stronger direct connections with UK Research and Innovation, and
- Collaborate with the Department of Culture Media and Sport.

Environment and climate change

2.18 The Government considers the MCCA a crucial partner in transitioning Great Britain to a low cost, clean power energy system by 2030 and save households money on their bills by implementing the Warm Homes Plan, which would also reduce carbon emissions.

2.19 The Consultation sets out that the MCCA would have roles to play:

- In co-ordinating the zoning of local heat networks,
- On net zero including on Great British Energy's Local Power Plan and Warm Homes Plan, and
- In Local Nature Recovery Strategies through convening partnerships and coordinating action, funding and delivery.

It is not yet clear what impact what this will have on local authority's current responsibilities.

Health, wellbeing and public service reform

2.20 MCCAs will have a new bespoke duty to ensure that it takes into account the need to improve health outcomes and reduce health inequalities when exercising its powers and functions. The Government considers that this would give the Authority a clear stake in improving health outcomes and support the Authority to drive a "health in all policies" approach.

Public Safety

2.21 To compliment the roles of local councils in this area, the government has expressed the intention to increase the number of Mayors who take on Police and Crime Commissioner and Fire and Rescue Authority responsibilities. The consultation document at Appendix 1 sets out that where devolution areas align with police force and fire and rescue geographies, Mayors would become responsible for those functions.

3 ESCC Consultation Response

3.1 The establishment of an MCCA will have significant implications for the area and also the Council. Appendix 2 sets out the proposed response to the consultation document. In summary, the response is supportive of the creation of the MCCA and recognises the benefits that it can bring to the area. The response does raise some concerns such as in relation to the proposed name and also seeks further information and reasoning in relation to issues such as the voting arrangements, involvement of partners

and reassurance in relation to issues around funding and transition arrangements e.g. TUPE and contract novations, where the MCCA takes over particular functions.

3.2 The consultation document expands on the White Paper and provides some further clarity about the powers and functions that the MCCA and Mayor will have, and how those relate to the current local government landscape. It is clear from the consultation that the MCCA as well as drawing powers down from Government will also perform functions that are currently the responsibility of the local authorities. Greater clarity will be provided when the Devolution Bill is published with a view to it becoming legislation in 2026, setting out those powers and functions that will be automatically vested in the MCCA. It is likely that any MCCA will come into being ahead of the Bill becoming law and so the powers and functions that any MCCA would have in the meantime, will be set out in the statutory instrument that gives effect to the creation of the Authority.

4. Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

4.1 The establishment of a MCCA could lead to significant benefits for the area, attracting investment and ensuring a strategic approach across a significant geography to ensure a joined-up approach in relation to areas including environment and climate change, transport, infrastructure, skills, economic development and strategic planning. There are still details that need clarification which are raised in the draft consultation response and will also be raised as discussions progress, should approval be given by the Government to establish the Authority, and prior to the Council giving its approval to the Statutory Order that will be required.

BECKY SHAW
Chief Executive

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Local Members
All

Background Documents
English Devolution White Paper - GOV.UK



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Open consultation

Sussex and Brighton devolution consultation

Published 17 February 2025

Applies to England

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Establishing a Mayoral Combined County Authority across East Sussex, West Sussex and Brighton and Hove

Topic of this consultation:

This consultation seeks views on a proposal to form a Mayoral Combined County Authority for the local government areas of East Sussex County Council, West Sussex County Council, and Brighton and Hove City Council (referred to as Sussex and Brighton in this consultation).

In December 2024, the government published the [English Devolution White Paper](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-devolution-white-paper-power-and-partnership-foundations-for-growth/english-devolution-white-paper) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-devolution-white-paper-power-and-partnership-foundations-for-growth/english-devolution-white-paper>). This sets out plans to move power out of Westminster and back to local communities, ensuring that every part of England is covered by devolution. The local council leaders from East Sussex County Council, West Sussex County Council, and Brighton and Hove City Council have since written to government expressing their interest in taking forward devolution within their area through the establishment of a Mayoral Combined County Authority, with the first election for a Mayor taking place in May 2026. Before taking a decision on whether to proceed with the making of the necessary legislation, the government is seeking views from interested parties, including those who live and work in the area.

Scope of this consultation:

This consultation seeks views, particularly from interested parties, including those who live and work across Sussex and Brighton, on the effect of establishing a Mayoral Combined County Authority in the area. It includes questions on the proposed geography and how the Combined County Authority will make decisions, together with questions on the effects of working across this geography through a Mayoral Combined County Authority.

In some parts of the country, there may be proposals for reorganisation of existing councils. This is a separate process and is not covered by this consultation. Further information on this is set out in this document.

Geographical scope:

These proposals only have direct effect within the geographical area covered by the local councils listed above.

Proposed Sussex and Brighton geography



Basic information

Body/bodies responsible for the consultation:

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

Duration:

This consultation will last until 13 April 2025 23:59.

How to respond:

We encourage everyone to use this opportunity to share your opinions on the proposal for the establishment of a Mayoral Combined County Authority across this area.

The easiest way for you to respond and engage in the consultation is by completing the [online form](https://consult.communities.gov.uk/lggc/sussex-and-brighton-devolution-consultation) (<https://consult.communities.gov.uk/lggc/sussex-and-brighton-devolution-consultation>). Once you are on the website, you will be guided through the specific questions on which we are seeking views.

If you are unable to provide your views through the online form, you can alternatively email or post your response to the questions. Details on how to do this are set out in Annex B. Please follow the format of the

questions as set out in Annex B. For email and postal responses, please make clear which area consultation you are responding to (there are a number of live consultations on English devolution). This consultation is about a proposal to form a Mayoral Combined County Authority for the local government areas of East Sussex County Council, West Sussex County Council, and Brighton and Hove City Council.

1. Background

1.1 Devolution context

Through devolution, areas and their local leaders receive more powers, functions and funding to take decisions about local priorities. Currently, over 34 million people – around 61% of the population of England – are covered by a devolution arrangement. However, England remains one of the most centralised countries in the developed world, meaning decisions are too often taken by central government rather than by local leaders.

In December 2024, the government published the [English Devolution White Paper](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-devolution-white-paper-power-and-partnership-foundations-for-growth/english-devolution-white-paper) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-devolution-white-paper-power-and-partnership-foundations-for-growth/english-devolution-white-paper>), which set out a new Devolution Framework for English devolution which will move power out of Westminster and into the hands of those who know their area best. The White Paper sets out how further devolution to local areas within England can help deliver economic growth and more joined-up delivery of public services, and increase trust in politics.

Devolution can achieve this through enabling more decisions to be taken at a more local level, thereby making it easier to tailor decisions to local needs and priorities; enabling more coordinated action in a place; giving communities a greater say in decisions that affect them; and driving innovation in policy and delivery.

The government's ultimate ambition on devolution is universal coverage across England, with a strong preference for every area to have a Mayor, so that every part of the country can unlock the benefits and

opportunities that devolution brings.

1.2 Introduction to Combined County Authorities and Mayors

Combined County Authorities are organisations made up of a group of councils who come together over larger areas that people recognise and work in. They allow councils to work together in a structured way and take decisions over a wider area footprint, with powers and responsibilities being held by that Combined County Authority. Combined County Authorities do not replace the councils in your area – and services such as social care, libraries and education that are provided by the council continue to be provided by the council.

A Combined County Authority can be led by a directly elected Mayor. This is then known as a Mayoral Combined County Authority. The government is supportive of places having Mayors because they have a mandate to take big decisions affecting more people, they have convening power to tackle shared problems, and they are accountable to the local electorate for the decisions they take. Mayors in other parts of the country have become vital local leaders, delivering on the promise of change in their area to drive growth, more joined-up delivery, and earning trust.

1.3 The Devolution Priority Programme

Many parts of the country (such as Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region, the East Midlands, York and North Yorkshire, and the West of England) now have Mayoral Combined Authorities or Mayoral Combined County Authorities. London also has a directly elected Mayor and the Greater London Authority. These institutions have received funding, powers and functions in areas like skills, transport, and housing. However, many parts of the country do not yet have devolution arrangements like this.

In the English Devolution White Paper, the government set out the ambition of delivering devolution to more parts of England, aiming to establish new Combined Authorities or Combined County Authorities that would have

Mayors elected in May 2026.

To achieve this, the government has established the Devolution Priority Programme, to provide a fast-track to creating Mayoral Combined Authorities or Mayoral Combined County Authorities for areas ready to come together over sensible geographies which meet the criteria set out in the White Paper. These places will receive the full backing of government to deliver to these ambitious timescales.

In July 2024, the government invited areas currently without devolution arrangements to put forward proposals for how they would like to take on devolution in their area. Following the publication of the White Paper, these areas had the opportunity to seek to join the Devolution Priority Programme. The government received positive responses from a number of different places, and local council leaders of East Sussex County Council, West Sussex County Council and Brighton and Hove City Council applied to join the Devolution Priority Programme to establish a Mayoral Combined County Authority over the geography of those local councils.

Following an assessment of geography and readiness, the government announced that Sussex and Brighton will be part of the Devolution Priority Programme, along with the five other areas listed below:

- Cumbria (Cumberland Council, Westmorland and Furness Council);
- Cheshire and Warrington (Cheshire East Council, Cheshire West and Chester Council, Warrington Borough Council);
- Hampshire and the Solent (Hampshire County Council, Portsmouth City Council, Isle of Wight Council, Southampton City Council);
- Greater Essex (Essex County Council, Thurrock Council, Southend-on-Sea City Council); and
- Norfolk and Suffolk (Norfolk County Council, Suffolk County Council).

1.4 Implementing devolution in Sussex and Brighton

There is a statutory process that has to be followed to establish a Combined County Authority. This includes a public consultation to seek local views and inform a final decision by government.

The government is minded to establish a Mayoral Combined County Authority for Sussex and Brighton. It will take a decision on whether to proceed with the necessary implementing legislation after considering responses to this consultation and whether a series of statutory tests have been met. In particular, Ministers will need to decide:

- Whether they consider that the establishment of a Combined County Authority in the area is likely to improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of some or all of the people who live or work in the area;
- Whether establishing a Combined County Authority in the area is appropriate, having regard to the need to:
 - secure effective and convenient local government; and,
 - reflect the identities and interests of local communities.

Ministers will also consider all factors in the round when taking the decision on whether to proceed with the necessary implementing legislation, including an equalities impact assessment and an environmental principles policy statement.

If a decision is taken to proceed, and providing councils consent, the next stage is for ministers to make secondary legislation establishing the Combined County Authority and providing for the election of a Mayor. This legislation will also confer some transport and economic regeneration functions onto the Combined County Authority. This will allow the Combined County Authority to begin work on delivering local priorities from day one.

The Mayor for the area would then also represent the area on the Council of Nations and Regions, which includes the Prime Minister, the First Minister of Scotland, the First Minister of Wales, the First and Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland, and the Mayors of Combined Authorities and Combined County Authorities of England. The Mayor would also represent the area on the Mayoral Council (which includes the Deputy Prime Minister and the Mayors of Combined Authorities and Combined County Authorities of England) to enable the area's voice to be heard at a national level.

If the decision is taken not to proceed, then the Mayoral Combined County Authority would not be established to the timelines of the Devolution Priority Programme. This would mean that the area would not receive the full

suite of powers, funding and functions as set out in Section 3 of this consultation, and the area would not be represented on the Council of Nations and Regions. The government will continue to work with local councils on the best devolution approach for their area.

The government will introduce an English Devolution Bill to Parliament in due course. The intention of that Bill is to automatically confer all the powers and functions in the Devolution Framework to the Mayoral Combined County Authority once it is established. Section 3 of this consultation outlines what these functions would be and explains the Devolution Framework.

If the Bill does not receive Royal Assent and its provisions do not come into force, the government intends to bring forward secondary legislation to confer the functions in the Devolution Framework to the Mayoral Combined County Authority.

2. Proposed Institution, Governance and Decision Making Arrangements

2.1 Name and geographic area

It is proposed that a Mayoral Combined County Authority is established over the local authority areas of East Sussex, West Sussex and Brighton. The government's proposal is that the Combined County Authority would be formally known as the Sussex and Brighton Combined County Authority.

2.2 Membership

Constituent councils

The county councils of East and West Sussex, and Brighton and Hove City Council, would be the constituent councils of the proposed Combined County Authority.

Each council would appoint two representatives to be constituent members. This means that there would be six constituent council members in total. Constituent councils would each be able to appoint the same number of substitute members as they appoint constituent members to act in the absence of their constituent members.

The Mayor

The Combined County Authority would have a Mayor, directly elected by local government electors (which are those eligible to vote in local council elections who are on the electoral register) across the three constituent council areas. The first mayoral election would take place on 7 May 2026. Mayors are typically elected on 4-year terms.

The Mayor would be a constituent member of the Combined County Authority, and exercise the mayoral functions outlined in the Devolution Framework on behalf of the Combined County Authority.

The Mayor would be required to appoint a deputy Mayor from among the constituent members to act in their absence or if the office of the mayor is vacant.

The Mayor would be permitted to appoint a maximum of one political advisor.

Non-constituent and associate members

The Sussex and Brighton Combined County Authority's constituent members would be able to appoint a maximum of six non-constituent and associate members to support the delivery of their work programme. Non-constituent members are representatives of an organisation; for example, a district council, local NHS trust, the Police and Crime Commissioner, or a local registered provider. Associate members are named individuals who can provide particular experience or expertise – for example, on active travel, or local businesses.

2.3 Role of district councils

Much of England has two tiers of local government – upper-tier county councils and lower-tier district councils – with responsibility for local services split between the two.

The constituent councils of the proposed Combined County Authority would be the upper tier authorities only. Under the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, district councils cannot be full constituent members of a Combined County Authority. However, they could participate as non-constituent members and serve on committees (see section 2.5 on non-constituent members' role in decision-making).

2.4 Combined County Authority powers, functions and funding

The Combined County Authority and its Mayor would have some functions conferred onto them as part of the secondary legislation establishing the Combined County Authority as an institution. These functions would enable them to begin work on delivering local priorities from day one and are expected to include economic development and transport.

The [English Devolution White Paper \(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-devolution-white-paper-power-and-partnership-foundations-for-growth/english-devolution-white-paper\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-devolution-white-paper-power-and-partnership-foundations-for-growth/english-devolution-white-paper) sets out the government's ambitions for devolution. This includes the powers, functions and funding available to combined county authorities – a summary table is included at Annex A.

The collection of powers, functions and funding is known as the Devolution Framework. The powers, functions and funding of a Combined County Authority vary depending on its governance and maturity. The government's intention would be for the Sussex and Brighton Combined County Authority to have the powers, functions and funding set out at the mayoral level of the framework. These functions would give the Combined County Authority and the Mayor greater local control over areas such as transport, adult education and skills, and housing to enable improvements in local connectivity, educational outcomes, economic development, driving economic growth and improved social wellbeing.

The government intends to implement the Devolution Framework via the English Devolution Bill; the functions within it would then automatically be conferred onto any existing Combined County Authority if the Bill receives

Royal Assent, and the provisions come into force.

2.5 Decision making at the Combined County Authority

The Combined County Authority's constituent members (the Mayor and the six constituent council members) would be the decision makers within the Combined County Authority. Constituent members would automatically have voting rights. Non-constituent members can be given voting rights at the discretion of the Combined County Authority; associate members cannot be given voting rights.

All members would have a single vote. The default voting arrangement for Combined Authority decisions to be approved would be a simple majority in favour, including the Mayor (i.e. 4 out of 7).

No decisions can be made at a Combined County Authority meeting unless the Mayor (or deputy Mayor) and at least four constituent council members are present.

2.6 Oversight

To ensure effective scrutiny of decision making and audit of how resources are used, the Combined County Authority would have at least one Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and one Audit Committee, in line with the requirements of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023.

Further improvements to accountability and oversight are in development and are included in Section 5 of the English Devolution White Paper ahead of legislation being laid.

2.7 Remuneration

The Sussex and Brighton Combined County Authority would approve a scheme for the allowances for constituent members, following consideration of a report from an Independent Remuneration Panel. The Mayor can be paid an allowance as agreed by the constituent council members, also following consideration of a report from an Independent Remuneration Panel.

2.8 Local government reorganisation and its impacts

Councils in this area have been invited to develop proposals for new unitary local government. This would replace the existing two-tier system, where services are split between a county and district councils, and bring these services together in unitary local government, creating opportunities for service transformation which can support improvements in delivery. The aim is to build empowered, simplified, resilient and sustainable local government for your area that will increase value for money for council taxpayers and enable more funding to be spent on local public services.

This process (known as “local government reorganisation”) is a separate process to the one in this consultation. On 5 February 2025, the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution invited all councils in your area to develop unitary proposals. All councils in your area have been invited to undertake wide engagement before submitting robust and evidenced unitary proposals to government by 26 September. The established assessment and decision making process will then be followed to determine which, if any, of the proposals submitted are to be implemented.

Further information is being made available at [Local government reorganisation: Policy and programme updates - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-government-reorganisation-policy-and-programme-updates) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-government-reorganisation-policy-and-programme-updates>)

This local government reorganisation process does not affect the potential establishment of this Combined County Authority or the Mayoral election in May 2026. In due course, if a proposal is implemented, any new unitary councils will become the constituent members of the Combined County Authority and, legally, it will become a Combined Authority. This change does not affect the functions/powers or funding available to the area. The governance and decision making arrangements within the Combined Authority will then be updated to reflect any changes needed.

Legislation has also been made to postpone local council elections from May 2025 to May 2026 in: Norfolk County Council and Suffolk County Council; Essex County Council and Thurrock Council; Hampshire County Council and the Isle of Wight Council; East Sussex County Council and West Sussex County Council. This will allow these councils to deliver both devolution and local government reorganisation to the most ambitious timeline, working toward the first election for the Mayors of the Combined County Authorities in May 2026.

3. What powers would be available

The [English Devolution White Paper \(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-devolution-white-paper-power-and-partnership-foundations-for-growth/english-devolution-white-paper\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-devolution-white-paper-power-and-partnership-foundations-for-growth/english-devolution-white-paper) sets out the powers, functions and funding for all Combined County Authorities such as the one proposed in this consultation. This is known as the Devolution Framework. The framework is the floor, not the ceiling, of the government's ambitions, which means it will be reviewed regularly to consider whether it can be deepened, with more powers being given to local areas that have a Combined County Authority with a Mayor.

The framework has three tiers – Foundation, Mayoral, and Established Mayoral. If the Mayoral Combined County Authority in this consultation was created, it would be set up at the 'Mayoral' tier. The institution could then progress in the future to the 'Established Mayoral' tier, subject to meeting certain eligibility criteria (see section 2.2.4 of the White Paper). This means that, at the Established Mayoral tier, it would be eligible to receive more powers and funding from central government.

The framework is to be implemented through the English Devolution Bill, subject to its passage through Parliament and receiving Royal Assent. A table summarising the devolution framework is provided in Annex A,

and a more detailed summary of what powers, functions and funding the Combined County Authority would receive under that Bill is set out below. For full detail of the powers, functions and funding that the Combined County Authority would receive based on being in the Mayoral tier, please refer to Chapter 3 of the English Devolution White Paper.

3.1 Funding

The below sets out the types of funding available to Mayoral Combined County Authorities.

The Mayoral Combined County Authority would receive devolved funding from central government, including those relating to the following policies:

- Housing and regeneration.
- Local growth.
- Adult skills (except apprenticeships).
- Local transport.

This gives the Mayoral Combined County Authority control over how funding is spent, including to tailor how it is spent to meet local needs in the area. As with all government programmes, the precise programmes that will be devolved (and the amount of funding) will be determined through the Spending Review in June (which is central government's process for setting budgets, which determines which government programmes exist and their funding amount).

However, Mayoral Combined Authorities that were in existence in the Spending Review period 2021-2024 received funding from central government, such as:

- Funding to support housing on brownfield sites in the area.
- Funding for local growth in the area.

- Devolved funding for skills, such as the Adult Skills Fund, which is used to fund education and training for adults aged 19 and above.
- Devolved funding for local transport, such as funding to support maintaining and improving the highways network and funding to support bus services and keep fares down.

In addition, the Mayoral Combined County Authority would receive a 30-year 'Investment Fund' from central government. The amount of this fund would be confirmed at the government's Spending Review in June 2025. However, the parameters of it are:

- It is a flexible fund for local leaders to drive economic growth. The priorities for it are set locally through the Mayoral Combined County Authority – not by central government.
- It is long term, covering a period of 30 years. The intention of this is to give certainty when local leaders (through the Mayoral Combined County Authority) make decisions on investments.
- It is a mix of revenue spending (which can be spent on 'day-to-day' policies like adult skills) and capital spending (which is money spent on investment in policies like housing).

The Mayoral Combined County Authority would also receive capacity funding from central government to help set up the new organisation.

The Mayoral Combined County Authority would have the ability to introduce a mayoral precept on council tax should they choose to do so. This allows the authority to raise money to fund local priorities.

3.2 Transport and local infrastructure

The government believes that high quality transport infrastructure and services support growth and opportunity, and that bringing decisions about transport closer to people is key to improving the transport networks everyone relies on. The Combined County Authority would become the Local Transport Authority for its area, which means it is responsible for public transport services, like buses, instead of local authorities.

Buses and active travel

In many parts of England, bus services have been deregulated since the Transport Act 1985. This means services are run by private bus operators who set the routes, fares, and timetables.

As a Local Transport Authority, the Mayoral Combined County Authority would be empowered (but not required) to change this approach across the whole area in order to improve local bus services. They could decide to pursue:

- An Enhanced Partnership, under which Local Transport Authorities (like the Mayoral Combined County Authority) have more powers to work with bus operators to set a vision for bus services across the whole area and a plan to help achieve these improvements.
- A franchised system, under which the Mayoral Combined County Authority awards contracts for buses in their area (or in specific routes), and these contracts can be used to determine things like routes, timetables, fares and branding. This is the model used in London and introduced recently in Greater Manchester.
- Publicly owned bus companies, which could work alongside either an Enhanced Partnership or a franchised bus system.

The powers for this are set out in the government's Bus Services Bill and more information on the powers available to Local Transport Authorities (such as the Mayoral Combined County Authority) is set out in the [overview of the Bus Services Bill \(https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a80769a40f0b62302693a81/the-bus-services-bill-an-overview.pdf\)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a80769a40f0b62302693a81/the-bus-services-bill-an-overview.pdf).

The Combined County Authority would play an important role in decarbonising transport and reducing the environmental and health impacts of transport. The government would expect the Combined County Authority to develop plans to decarbonise and reduce air pollution from their local bus fleet, including how and when emissions reductions will be delivered.

Active travel (such as walking, wheeling, and cycling) delivers a range of benefits for people and communities. Active Travel England (which is a central government organisation sponsored by the Department for Transport) would support the Combined County Authority to increase capability and address skill gaps to ensure a consistent approach to safety and accessibility for all users, with a right to request capability assessments for their constituent authorities.

Rail

The government is seeking to put passengers and local communities back at the heart of railways and to protect their interests. The proposed Mayoral Combined County Authority would play an important role in this:

- The Mayor would have a statutory role (meaning a role set out in law) in governing, managing, planning, and developing the rail network. The intention is that the Mayor can use this role to embed the voice of their community in decisions on the rail network. Government will consult on this role ahead of the legislation required.
- If they meet transparent criteria, the Mayor would also be given the option for greater control over local rail stations. Rail stations are generally currently controlled either by central government, through a body known as Network Rail, or by train operating companies. Mayors will be given the option of greater control so they can capitalise on the opportunities in and around rail stations for local people, for economic growth, accessibility, and intermodal connectivity. For example, this might include regenerating the area around the rail station, working to join up different forms of transport, or building homes.
- Engagement with the Department for Transport on its national rail planning processes. This has been trialled with Greater Manchester and West Midlands Combined Authorities already, and is intended to allow local ambitions to be better reflected in national policy.
- The government would work in close collaboration with the Mayoral Combined County Authority to deliver shared ambitions on ticketing. London has shown how ticketing systems that are integrated across different forms of transport can help to get more people onto public transport. The Department for Transport (through an organisation known as Great British Railways) is committed to working in partnership with Mayoral Combined County Authorities to deliver these sorts of ambitions, building on existing 'pay-as-you-go rail pilots' (which are trials that allow passengers to tap in and out of stations using a contactless card or device).

Roads

The Mayoral Combined County Authority would play a key coordination role in the local road network. It would work with National Highways on the strategic road network (which covers motorways and some A roads), and its constituent councils on local roads. Responsibility for local roads would remain with the councils, and not with the Mayoral Combined County Authority.

This includes:

- The Mayoral Combined County Authority would set up and coordinate a 'Key Route Network' (KRN) on behalf of the Mayor. A KRN is a collection of locally important roads – the aim of setting it up is to allow for major roads to be managed in a strategic way, to improve traffic flow, reduce congestion, introduce bus priority, or cycle infrastructure across an area. Mayors would also hold a 'power of direction' over this network to support delivery of their agreed Local Transport Plan. This means they can require a constituent council to use their road powers in a way that is consistent with the KRN.
- As the Local Transport Authority, the Mayoral Combined County Authority would be empowered to regulate on-street micromobility schemes (like hire bikes), so local areas can shape these schemes around their needs, connect people to public transport, and tackle the problem of badly-parked cycles and e-cycles.
- Subject to a separate consultation, it is proposed that the government will devolve approval of local Lane Rental schemes to Mayoral Combined County Authorities. This would enable constituent councils to charge the companies undertaking roadworks on busy roads at busy times with the aim of minimising disruption by seeking the Mayoral Combined County Authority's approval, rather than the Department for Transport.
- National Highways are committed to formalising and strengthening its relationship with Mayoral Combined County Authorities, which will ensure a more cohesive approach to the management and development of England's strategic road network alongside local roads.

3.3 Skills and employment support

The Mayoral Combined County Authority would receive:

- Devolved adult skills funding and functions from the Department for Education. Adult skills funding is intended to support adults aged over 19 to participate in education and training.
- Devolution of future 'supported employment' funding from the Department for Work and Pensions – which is funding to help disabled people, people with health conditions, and those with more complex barriers to work to find a suitable job and sustain work. It can also be used to help those in work but at risk of falling out of the labour market to retain their job.

These funds would support the Mayoral Combined County Authority to do things like tailor the training and support for adults in the area to the types of jobs available locally, and to local priorities. The government has also committed to giving Mayoral Combined County Authorities a substantive role in co-designing any future national employment support programmes that is additional to the core work done by Jobcentre Plus. The Mayoral Combined County Authority would also be asked to produce a local Get Britain Working Plan for its area, which would be focused on reducing economic inactivity and driving integration between national and local health, work, and skills provision in the area.

The Mayoral Combined County Authority would also take on joint ownership of the Local Skills Improvement Plan model with Employer Representative Bodies. These Plans set the strategic direction for skills provision in the area and could help to facilitate opportunities for 16-19-year-olds to undertake apprenticeships, education and training that lead to good quality employment opportunities.

3.4 Housing and strategic planning

The government is committed to delivering 1.5 million new homes in this Parliament, and Mayoral Combined County Authorities are integral to meeting that commitment:

- The Mayoral Combined County Authority would be given control of funding to support regeneration and housing delivery. As set out in section 3.1, the precise funds and amount would be determined through the next Spending Review. However, as context, Mayoral Combined Authorities that existed in the period 2021 to 2024 received control of funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to support the delivery of housing on brownfield sites.
- The Mayoral Combined County Authority would have a strategic place partnership with Homes England (which is a central government organisation sponsored by the Ministry for Housing, Communities, and Local Government) – a formal partnership arrangement which brings together their respective strengths and resources.
- The Mayoral Combined County Authority would also have powers to drive regeneration in their area. For example, they would have powers to establish Mayoral Development Corporations, which are statutory bodies

created to help deliver regeneration schemes. Housing and strategic planning powers are set out in Section 3.5 of the English Devolution White Paper.

- The government has recently announced that, in all parts of the country, groups of councils will be required to work together to develop Spatial Development Strategies (SDS). In this area, that work would be led by the Mayoral Combined County Authority, with the Mayor empowered to develop and propose the SDS. Once an SDS is in place, the Mayor would also be given powers, similar to those held by the Mayor of London, to ‘call in’ planning applications of ‘strategic importance’. These powers will enable Mayors to scrutinise the most significant planning proposals in their area to ensure they support the SDS. The Mayor would also receive the ability to charge new developments (such as developments led by private sector housebuilders) in their area. This is known as a ‘Mayoral Community Infrastructure Levy’ and the revenue collected is used to help deliver local infrastructure.

3.5 Economic development and regeneration

The Mayoral Combined County Authority would play a crucial role in attracting international investment for the area – supporting business to thrive and grow, and creating vibrant places where people want to live and work.

To help achieve this, the Mayoral Combined County Authority would take lead responsibility for managing and focusing local programmes that provide businesses with support and advice on things like introductions to local supply chains or help with starting a new business (known as ‘business support’ programmes). This involves hosting the local Growth Hub, which is part of a national Business Growth Service but can tailor its services to the needs of the local economy and local businesses. The Mayoral Combined County Authority and the Department for Business and Trade would form a strategic partnership to align national and local policymaking. The partnership would also ensure effective delivery of interventions to boost domestic business growth, boost exports, encourage inward investment and grow the co-operative and mutual economy.

To support the Mayoral Combined County Authority to unlock their area’s innovation potential, working in partnership with businesses and universities, there would be stronger direct connections with UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), which is a central government organisation that directs research and innovation funding, funded through the science budget of the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology.

Given the importance of culture, heritage, sport, and tourism to local economies and communities, the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (and its Arm's Length Bodies, such as Historic England) would explore a deeper, collaborative partnership with the Mayoral Combined County Authority.

3.6 Environment and climate change

Making Britain a clean energy superpower is one of the government's five defining missions. The decarbonisation journey will support efforts to protect the natural environment and biodiversity. The Mayoral Combined County Authority would be a crucial partner in transitioning Great Britain to a low-cost, clean power energy system by 2030, and in implementing the Warm Homes Plan to save households money on their bills and to reduce the UK's carbon emissions. The Combined County Authority would have a role in co-ordinating the zoning of local heat networks, meaning they would play a role in the delivery of heat decarbonisation.

The Combined County Authority would also have a strategic role on net zero including on Great British Energy's Local Power Plan and Warm Homes Plan. In order to provide local, place-based environmental leadership, the Combined County Authority would play a leadership role in Local Nature Recovery Strategies, through convening partnerships and coordinating action, funding and delivery.

3.7 Health, wellbeing, and public service reform

The government believes that Mayoral Combined County Authorities have a key role to play in improving health and wellbeing alongside wider public service reform. To support the Mayoral Combined County Authority to drive a "health in all policies" approach, it would have a new bespoke duty in relation to health improvement and health inequalities. This duty would ensure that the Mayoral Combined County Authority takes into account the need to improve health outcomes and reduce health inequalities when exercising their powers and functions, giving them a clear stake in improving local health outcomes.

By working with other local leaders, the institution would also be able to bring together local partners to work together on reforming, and driving improvements in, public services. For example, the government has established an expectation that Mayors will be considered for the role of chair for the NHS Integrated Care Partnership. The government would also work with stakeholders in the Mayoral Combined County Authority's area to identify areas to facilitate the alignment of public service boundaries and closer working when there is a clear rationale for doing so, and where the benefits significantly exceed any costs and risks incurred.

3.8 Public safety

The Mayoral Combined County Authority would have an important role to play in achieving the government's Safer Streets Mission, supporting rehabilitation, and reducing reoffending, and in supporting the safety of their residents and the resilience of their communities. This should complement the role local councils play in this area. To deliver this, the government is committed to increasing the number of Mayors who take on Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) responsibilities. Generally, where devolution geographies align with police force and fire and rescue geographies, Mayors would become responsible for exercising PCC and FRA functions.

3.9 Established Mayoral Status

In time, the Mayoral Combined County Authority could apply for 'Established Mayoral' Status, which is a deeper level of devolution – meaning, for example, more powers and funding from central government. If they achieved this status, they would automatically receive the additional powers available at that level, including an Integrated Settlement, which will give the area even greater funding freedom and flexibility. The conditions the Mayoral Combined County Authority would need to meet to become eligible are set out in Section 2.2.4 of the English Devolution White Paper; and the deeper powers available to them are summarised in the fourth column of the table in Annex A of this consultation document.

4. What this means for Sussex and Brighton

4.1 Overview of Sussex and Brighton

Sussex and Brighton has a combined population of around 1.7 million.^[footnote 1] The geographic identity of the region is predominantly rural, but still has numerous and diverse urban centres such as Crawley, Worthing, Horsham and Haywards Heath, the historic town of Lewes, important market towns such as Crowborough and Uckfield, the cathedral city of Chichester and a key cultural and economic hub in the city of Brighton and Hove. There are also the coastal towns of Bognor Regis and Littlehampton, Eastbourne, Bexhill on Sea and Hastings. The area also contains two ports, three universities and two further education college groups.

Sussex and Brighton is rich in natural capital, with East Sussex being one of the most wooded parts of lowland Britain, and prominent natural landscapes such as the High Weald, Ashdown Forest, Pevensey levels, Chichester Harbour and the South Downs National Park. The Living Coast is the only UNESCO designated urban biosphere in the UK covering 390 square km of Sussex Coastline from Newhaven to Shoreham-on-Sea.

Culturally, Sussex and Brighton is renowned as having a unique identity with strong cultural and heritage traditions such as bonfire celebrations, and the Battle of Hastings in 1066. The county has its own unofficial anthem 'Sussex by the Sea' which was adopted by the Royal Sussex Regiment in the First World War. Sussex residents have a strong independence of thought, which led to the motto "we won't be druv" (meaning "we will not be driven").

The region benefits from London Gatwick Airport, and Newhaven and Shoreham Ports. The A27 is a critical east-west route along the south coast, with the A23, A29, A21, A22 and A259 roads connecting coastal towns and cities with the M25 and London.

4.2 Economic and social outlook

Sussex and Brighton contributes more than £48bn Gross Value Added (GVA)^[footnote 2], making it the seventh largest UK economy in terms of total output, and is home to 84,900 registered businesses.^[footnote 3] A particularly economically successful area is the Gatwick Diamond, which stretches from south London to Brighton and is home to 45,000 businesses including 500 international businesses and has an economy of £24bn GVA.^[footnote 4]

The area has strengths in nationally significant sectors such as advanced manufacturing and green energy. For advanced manufacturing, the Manor Business District in Crawley is home to Thales' flagship site - their largest in the UK, from which they have delivered equipment and services to the Ministry of Defence since 1964 and employs around 1600 people.^[footnote 5] West Sussex is also home to Rolls Royce Motor Cars, owned by BMW who have recently announced a £300 million investment in their Goodwood Facility in Chichester. There is also a diverse manufacturing sector in East Sussex, including companies such as Britannia Superfine, TR Fastenings and Servomex Group Limited.

The areas green energy sector is underpinned by the Hydrogen plant at Shoreham Port and Rampion 1 offshore wind farm. A second Rampion 2 offshore wind development is in planning, and has been supported by the Sussex Energy initiative launched in late 2024. The recently launched Sussex Bay scheme brings together organisations, groups and individuals from along the Sussex coastline who want to help care for coastal habitats and aims to generate a £50 million fund for marine and fresh-water restoration projects by 2050.^[footnote 6]

The region has a strong visitor economy with a history going back centuries in places such as Arundel, Battle, Chichester, Hastings and Lewes - it welcomes 62 million visitors annually and the visitor economy in Sussex is worth £5 billion to the UK economy.^[footnote 7] The visitor economy sector is a major employer that supports 74,000 jobs (equivalent to 14% of all employment versus the England average of 11%).^[footnote 8]

Other notable sectors include financial services, with companies such as American Express and Legal & General in Brighton and Hove; and digital and creative, particularly in Brighton where jobs in digital and creative

sectors have grown by over 35% since 2015 and at a faster rate than London^[footnote 9] and the city has the highest concentration of gaming companies outside of London.

There are also emerging industries such as its wine sector - in 2023 wine made in the region accounted for 28% of the total wine produced in the United Kingdom, and has protected regional status^[footnote 10]. Through the Wine Tourism Growth Plan, the ambition is to grow the wine sector's contribution to tourism to £238m by 2040.^[footnote 11]

Sussex and Brighton has a strong Research and Development (R&D) presence. Elekta employ 800 staff for research and development and production of radiation therapy and radiosurgery-related equipment and clinical management for the treatment of cancer and brain disorders. Two specialists in vacuum technology Kurt J Lesker and Edwards, have their headquarters in St Leonards-on-Sea and Eastbourne. Tech companies such as Universal Quantum Computing and StingRay are drawing investment to the region. Innovation is supported through Crawley's Institute of Technology, the University of Chichester's Technology Park in Bognor Regis and the Sussex Innovation Hub based at the University of Sussex. There is also a planned Science and Technology Park in Burgess Hill.

Nearly 90% of the journeys in Sussex and Brighton start and finish in Sussex and Brighton, which demonstrates the extent to which commuting and other travel patterns are based around this area.^[footnote 12]

However, there are barriers to unlocking the region's potential. GVA per head is £28,264, which is lower than both the south-east (£35,845) and England as a whole (£33,976).^[footnote 13] The region has overall lower productivity than the regional average,^[footnote 14] partly due to a smaller younger population than other areas of England, and also due to the predominance of employment in lower-paid sectors.^[footnote 15]

There is demand for skills in engineering, specialist manufacturing and the growing wine sector, and the existing skills provision has not kept up with this demand.^[footnote 16] There are lower skill levels in the coastal towns and businesses in the smaller towns compete for skilled labour with the cities of Brighton and Hove and London.

Poor intra-regional transport connectivity (especially east-west) limits choices for young people in their education providers, provides a smaller pool of job opportunities and is a potential barrier to housing growth and inward investment.

Sussex and Brighton has experienced high house price growth, leading to higher house prices than the national average, [\[footnote 17\]](#) impacted by the high construction costs experienced by the South East region as well the demand from people moving to the area.

While the rural parts of Sussex are more prosperous and places like Crawley have high economic activity, significant regional disparities persist, with pockets of deprivation and health inequalities, particularly in coastal communities. This is predominantly driven by access to education, employment, health services and affordable housing. [\[footnote 18\]](#) For example, compared with England as a whole a higher proportion (18%) of people living in coastal communities within West Sussex report that they are “not in good health”. [\[footnote 19\]](#)

4.3 Working across Sussex and Brighton

All three local councils currently share a Visit England accredited Local Visitor Economy Partnership overseeing a new 10-year Strategy for Growth. Sussex Chambers of Commerce collaborate with all three local authorities, partners and business to deliver a shared Local Skills Improvement Plan.

The area is already covered by a single police force, Sussex Police, and Police and Crime Commissioner, and the NHS Sussex Integrated Care Board.

4.4 How devolution could impact Sussex and Brighton

Based on the powers and funding available, as set out in Section 3, a Mayoral Combined County Authority across the proposed geography could have the following impacts:

- **Transport** - New transport powers, including through the Mayoral Combined County Authority becoming the Local Transport Authority, could make it easier for people to commute and travel around Sussex and Brighton. On buses, the Mayoral Combined County Authority could decide to pursue opportunities across the whole

area such as a single 'enhanced partnership' or 'bus franchising'. This could improve public transport provision and enable more people to access a wider pool of job opportunities. This could be particularly impactful in Sussex and Brighton given the percentage of journeys that start and finish in Sussex and Brighton and the need to improve east-west connectivity. Given the key strategic roads that go through Sussex and Brighton, a stronger, more formal relationship with National Highways could be particularly beneficial.

- **Skills** - The skills powers and funding available could allow the Mayoral Combined County Authority to tailor the training and support for adults in the area to the types of jobs available locally and to local priorities. This could help ensure local skills provision meets the demand in sectors such as manufacturing, digital and creative.
- **Housing** – The funding and powers available to deliver new housing across the Mayoral Combined County Authority geography could help address issues around housing affordability.
- **Economic development** – The Mayoral Combined County Authority would play a key role in attracting investment into Sussex and Brighton and supporting business growth. This could support areas such as the Gatwick Diamond, and could support new businesses across Sussex and Brighton to grow and succeed. This could be particularly impactful in Sussex and Brighton given the importance of Gatwick Airport and Newhaven and Shoreham ports.
- **Environment and climate change** – A strong role for the Mayoral Combined County Authority, such as playing a leading role in local nature recovery strategies, could help maximise the benefits from Sussex and Brighton's natural environment. As a partner in the government's energy and climate change ambitions, the Mayoral Combined County Authority could also help the UK to meet its clean energy mission. This could include supporting the area's strong green energy sector.
- **Health, wellbeing and public service reform** – The Mayoral Combined County Authority could play a key role in improving health and wellbeing, underpinned by a new bespoke duty in relation to health improvement and health inequalities. This would mean that the Mayoral Combined County Authority would need to have regard to the need to improve health, and reduce health inequalities, in the exercise of its functions. Combined with an expectation that the Mayor would be appointed to the Integrated Care Partnership in the area, this could help strengthen the focus and increase the join up of action to address issues around ill health and inequalities across the area, for example in coastal communities.
- **Representation** – The Mayor would take a seat at the Prime Minister's Council of Nations and Regions as well as the Deputy Prime Minister's Mayoral Council, which would give the area a stronger voice with the

government. Sussex and Brighton would be one of the first parts of the South East of England to be represented.

5. Consultation questions

Having considered all of the above, please respond to the following questions. For each question, you can provide the following answers:

- Strongly agree.
- Agree.
- Neither agree nor disagree.
- Disagree.
- Strongly disagree.
- Don't know.
- Prefer not to say.

You will also be invited to explain your answers.

Question 1: To what extent do you agree or disagree that establishing a Mayoral Combined County Authority over the proposed geography will deliver benefits to the area?

Question 2: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed governance arrangements for the Mayoral Combined County Authority?

Question 3: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through the Mayoral Combined County Authority will support the economy of the area?

Question 4: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through the Mayoral Combined County Authority will improve social outcomes in the area?

Question 5: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through a Mayoral Combined County Authority will improve local government services in the area?

Question 6: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through a Mayoral Combined County Authority will improve the local natural environment and overall national environment?

Question 7: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through the Mayoral Combined County Authority will support the interests and needs of local communities and reflect local identities?

6. Next steps

Following the consultation, the Secretary of State will consider all responses and decide whether to establish a Mayoral Combined County Authority. If the Secretary of State decides to proceed, the government will confirm funding (subject to Spending Review) and, provided the constituent councils consent, the necessary secondary

legislation will be laid in Parliament. If approved by Parliament, the Combined County Authority would be established in time for the first mayoral election to take place in May 2026.

Annex A – Devolution Framework Summary Table

The government intends to implement the Devolution Framework via the English Devolution Bill; the functions within it would then automatically be conferred onto any existing Combined County Authority if the Bill receives Royal Assent, and the provisions come into force.

Key

(**) refers to functions for which funding will be included in Integrated Settlements for Established Mayoral Strategic Authorities

(^) refers to functions which apply to Combined and Combined County Authorities only

Detail	Foundation	Mayoral	Established
Funding and investment			
Access to a multi-departmental, long-term integrated funding settlement**			X
Long-term investment fund, with an agreed annual allocation		X	X
Removal of gateway review from investment fund, after Gateway One complete			X
Ability to introduce mayoral precepting on council tax^		X	X

Detail	Foundation	Mayoral	Established
Consolidation of local growth and place funding in a single pot**	X	X	X
Strategic leadership			
A statutory duty to produce Local Growth Plans		X	X
Membership of the Council of Nations and Regions		X	X
Membership of the Mayoral Data Council		X	X
Transport and local infrastructure			
Local Transport Authority and public transport functions, including bus franchising and responsibility for an area-wide Local Transport Plan	X	X	X
Simplification and consolidation of local transport funding**	X	X	X
Removal of certain Secretary of State consents, e.g. on lane rental schemes		X	X
Duty to establish a Key Route Network on the most important local roads^		X	X
Mayoral Power of Direction over use of constituent authority powers on the Key Route Network^		X	X
Priority for strategic rail engagement (including mayoral partnerships) with Great British Railways	X	X	X

Detail	Foundation	Mayoral	Established
Statutory role in governing, managing, planning, and developing the rail network		X	X
An option for greater control over local rail stations		X	X
A 'right to request' further rail devolution			X
Priority for support to deliver multi-modal ticketing			X
A clear, strategic role in the decarbonisation of the local bus fleet	X	X	X
Active Travel England support for constituent authority capability^	X	X	X
Formal partnership with National Highways		X	X
Skills and employment support			
Joint ownership of the Local Skills Improvement Plan model, with Employer Representative Bodies	X	X	X
Devolution of the core Adult Skills Fund	X		
Devolution of non-apprenticeship adult skills functions through a consolidated skills funding pot**		X	X
Central convening of youth careers provision including greater flexibility for Careers hubs		X	X
A clear role in relation to 16-19 education and training		X	X

Detail	Foundation	Mayoral	Established
Responsibility for developing local Get Britain Working Plans	X	X	X
Devolution of supported employment funding**	X	X	X
Co-design of future employment support that is additional to core Jobcentre Plus provision		X	X
Delegated delivery or commissioning of employment support that is additional to core Jobcentre Plus provision			X
Alignment of Jobcentre Plus boundaries with Strategic Authorities			X
Housing and strategic planning			
A duty to produce a Spatial Development Strategy	X	X	X
Strategic development management powers (once the Spatial Development Strategy is in place)		X	X
Ability to raise a Mayoral Community Infrastructure Levy to fund strategic infrastructure (once the Spatial Development Strategy is in place)		X	X
Ability to make Mayoral Development Orders		X	X
Ability to establish Mayoral Development Corporations		X	X
Homes England compulsory purchase powers (held concurrently)	X	X	X

Detail	Foundation	Mayoral	Established
Devolution of wider grant funding to support regeneration and housing delivery**		X	X
Ability to set the strategic direction of any future programme to support affordable housing provision in their area			X
Strategic Place Partnership with Homes England		X	X
Support to establish a public sector land commission			X
Economic development and regeneration			
Partnership working with Department for Science, Industry and Technology and UK Research and Innovation to explore opportunities for closer long-term collaboration in strengthening local research and innovation capacity	X	X	X
Develop joint innovation action plans with Innovate UK to shape long-term strategies and investments		X	X
Embed UK Research and Innovation lead points of contact for enhanced collaborative working on innovation with Mayoral Strategic Authorities that are committed to work collaboratively on innovation		X	X
Responsibility as the accountable body for the delivery of Growth Hubs	X	X	X
Devolution of Growth Hubs funding**			X

Detail	Foundation	Mayoral	Established
A Strategic Partnership with the Department for Business and Trade focused on domestic growth, exports, investment, and delivery of local growth priorities.		X	X
Partnership working with Department for Culture, Media and Sport Arm's Length Bodies to maximise culture, heritage, and sport spending in place	X	X	X
Environment and climate change			
Devolution of retrofit funding this parliament subject to a successful transition period (see 3.7)**			X
Heat network zoning coordination role	X	X	X
Coordinating local energy planning to support development of regional network energy infrastructure	X	X	X
Green jobs and skills coordination role	X	X	X
A strategic role on net zero in collaboration with government, including on Great British Energy's Local Power Plan and Warm Homes Plan	X	X	X
Responsibility for coordinating delivery and monitoring of Local Nature Recovery Strategies^	X	X	X
Health, wellbeing and public service reform			
A bespoke statutory health improvement and health inequalities duty^	X	X	X

Detail	Foundation	Mayoral	Established
Mayors engaged during the Integrated Care Boards chair appointment process		X	X
Mayors as members of local Integrated Care Partnerships, and consideration for position of chair or co-chair		X	X
A role in convening partners and driving cross-cutting public service reform, including looking at areas such as multiple disadvantage	X	X	X
Public safety			
Mayors accountable for the exercise of Police and Crime Commissioner functions where police force and mayoral boundaries align^		X	X
Mayors accountable for the exercise of Fire and Rescue Authority functions where fire and rescue service and mayoral boundaries align		X	X
A clear and defined role in local resilience, working with the Local Resilience Forum to embed resilience into broader policy and delivery^	X	X	X

Annex B – Address details and list of consultation questions

We encourage everyone to use this opportunity to share your opinions on the establishment of a Mayoral Combined County Authority across this area.

- The easiest way for you to respond and engage in the consultation is by completing the [online form](https://consult.communities.gov.uk/lggc/sussex-and-brighton-devolution-consultation) (<https://consult.communities.gov.uk/lggc/sussex-and-brighton-devolution-consultation>). Once you are on the website,

you will be guided through the specific questions on which we are seeking views.

- If you are unable to provide your views through the online form, you can alternatively email or post your response to the questions. For email and postal responses, we would ask that you make clear which area consultation you are responding to (there are a number of live consultations on English devolution).
- You should also make clear whether you disagree or agree with each question to ensure the statistics we collect following the consultation accurately reflect your views. We will categorise responses as 'do not have a view' where written responses are unclear. Please also confirm whether you are replying as an individual or submitting an official response on behalf of an organisation and include:
 - your name
 - your position (if applicable)
 - the name of organisation (if applicable)
 - an address (including post-code)
 - an email address
 - a contact telephone number

Written responses to the consultation questions may be sent by email to:

SussexandBrightonDevolutionConsultation@communities.gov.uk

Or posted to:

Devolution Priority Programme Consultation
English Devolution and Institutions Team
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
4th Floor
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government will not acknowledge receipt of responses.

Consultation questions

Question 1: To what extent do you agree or disagree that establishing a Mayoral Combined County Authority over the proposed geography will deliver benefits to the area?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

Please explain your answer.

Question 2: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed governance arrangements for the Mayoral Combined County Authority?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

Please explain your answer.

Question 3: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through the Mayoral Combined County Authority will support the economy of the area?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

Question 4: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through the Mayoral Combined County Authority will improve social outcomes in the area?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

Please explain your answer.

Question 5: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through a Mayoral Combined County Authority will improve local government services in the area?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

Please explain your answer.

Question 6: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through a Mayoral Combined County Authority will improve the local natural environment and overall national environment?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

Please explain your answer.

Question 7: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through the Mayoral Combined County Authority will support the interests and needs of local communities and reflect local identities?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

Please explain your answer.

About You

1. Please tell us how you found out about this consultation?

(select one)

- Social media
- Email
- GOV.UK website
- Local council website
- Poster/ leaflet
- Word of mouth
- News outlet (newspaper / TV / online)
- Other

2. What best describes your response?

(Select one)

- I am a member of the public, giving my views as an individual
- I am responding on behalf of, or as a representative of, a business or organisation

For those responding as a member of the public giving views as an individual

3. What is the first part of the postcode where you live? For example, if your postcode is AB1 2CD, you would write AB1

We ask this so that we can identify what Local Authority you live in and understand a bit more about the area where you live. We do not use this information to identify you.

4. What best describes your gender?

(Select one)

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to say
- Prefer to self-describe: (Open text box)

5. What is your age group?

(Select one)

- Under 18
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54

- 55-64
- 65-74
- 75+
- Prefer not to say

6. What is your ethnic group?

(Select one)

- White
- Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups
- Asian or Asian British
- Black, Black British, Caribbean or African
- Other ethnic group
- Prefer not to say

7. Do you consider yourself to be a disabled person or to have a long-term, limiting condition?

Please tick one box only

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

8. Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?

- Heterosexual/Straight
- Gay/Lesbian

- Bisexual
- Prefer not to say
- Other – Please write below

Routing for business/organisation

9. What best describes your organisation?

- Business
- County Council
- Unitary council
- District Council
- Town Council
- Parish Council
- Health Body
- Voluntary and community sector or charity
- Academic
- Elected representative
- Prefer not to say
- Other (Please Specify)

10. What is the first part of the postcode where your business or organisation is based? For example, if your postcode is AB1 2CD, you would write AB1.

We ask this so that we can identify what Local Authority your business/organisation is based in and understand a bit more about the area where it is located. We do not use this information to identify your organisation.

Annex C: About this consultation

This consultation document and consultation process adhere to the consultation principles issued by the Cabinet Office.

Representative groups are asked to give a summary of the people and organisations they represent and, where relevant, who else they have consulted in reaching their conclusions when they respond.

Information provided in response to this consultation may be published or disclosed in accordance with the access to information regimes (these are primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 and UK data protection legislation). In certain circumstances, this may therefore include personal data when required by law.

If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that, as a public authority, the department is bound by the information access regimes and may therefore be obliged to disclose all or some of the information you provide. In view of this, it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the department.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government will, at all times, process your personal data in accordance with UK data protection legislation and in the majority of circumstances this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties. A full privacy notice is included below in Annex D.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government will not acknowledge receipt of individual responses.

Your opinions are valuable to us. Thank you for taking the time to read this document and respond.

Are you satisfied that this consultation has followed the consultation principles? If not or you have any other observations about how we can improve the process please contact us via the [complaints procedure](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-housing-communities-local-government/about/complaints-procedure) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-housing-communities-local-government/about/complaints-procedure>).

Annex D: Personal data

The following is to explain your rights and give you the information you are entitled to under UK data protection legislation.

Note that this section only refers to personal data (your name, contact details and any other information that relates to you or another identified or identifiable individual personally) not the content otherwise of your response to the consultation.

1. The identity of the data controller and contact details of our Data Protection Officer.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) is the data controller. The Data Protection Officer can be contacted at dataprotection@communities.gov.uk or by writing to the following address: Data Protection Officer, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Fry Building, 2 Marsham Street, London SW1P 4DF.

2. Why we are collecting your personal data?

Your personal data is being collected as an essential part of the consultation process, so that we can contact you regarding your response and for statistical purposes. We may also use it to contact you about related matters.

We will collect your IP address if you complete a consultation online. We may use this to ensure that each person only completes a survey once. We will not use this data for any other purpose.

Sensitive types of personal data

Please do not share [special category](https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/lawful-basis-for-processing/special-category-data/#scd1) (<https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/lawful-basis-for-processing/special-category-data/#scd1>) personal data or criminal offence data if we have not asked for this unless absolutely necessary for the purposes of your consultation response. By 'special category personal data', we mean information about a living individual's:

- Race.
- Ethnic origin.
- Political opinions.
- Religious or philosophical beliefs.
- Trade union membership.
- Genetics.
- Biometrics.
- Health (including disability-related information).
- Sex life; or,
- sexual orientation.

By 'criminal offence data', we mean information relating to a living individual's criminal convictions or offences or related security measures.

3. Our legal basis for processing your personal data

The collection of your personal data is lawful under article 6(1)(e) of the UK General Data Protection Regulation as it is necessary for the performance by MHCLG of a task in the public interest/in the exercise of official authority vested in the data controller. Section 8(d) of the Data Protection Act 2018 states that this will include processing of personal data that is necessary for the exercise of a function of the Crown, a Minister of the Crown or a government department i.e. in this case a consultation.

Where necessary for the purposes of this consultation, our lawful basis for the processing of any special category personal data or 'criminal offence' data (terms explained under 'Sensitive Types of Data') which you submit in response to this consultation is as follows. The relevant lawful basis for the processing of special category personal data is Article 9(2)(g) UK GDPR ('substantial public interest'), and Schedule 1 paragraph 6 of the Data Protection Act 2018 ('statutory etc and government purposes'). The relevant lawful basis in relation to personal data relating to criminal convictions and offences data is likewise provided by Schedule 1 paragraph 6 of the Data Protection Act 2018.

4. With whom we will be sharing your personal data

MHCLG may appoint a 'data processor', acting on behalf of the Department and under our instruction, to help analyse the responses to this consultation. Where we do, we will ensure that the processing of your personal data remains in strict accordance with the requirements of the data protection legislation.

5. For how long we will keep your personal data, or criteria used to determine the retention period.

Your personal data will be held for two years from the closure of the consultation, unless we identify that its continued retention is unnecessary before that point

6. Your rights, e.g. access, rectification, restriction, objection

The data we are collecting is your personal data, and you have considerable say over what happens to it. You have the right:

- a. to see what data we have about you
- b. to ask us to stop using your data, but keep it on record
- c. to ask to have your data corrected if it is incorrect or incomplete
- d. to object to our use of your personal data in certain circumstances
- e. to lodge a complaint with the independent Information Commissioner (ICO) if you think we are not handling your data fairly or in accordance with the law. You can contact the ICO at <https://ico.org.uk/> (<https://ico.org.uk/>), or telephone 0303 123 1113.

Please contact us at the following address if you wish to exercise the rights listed above, except the right to lodge a complaint with the ICO: dataprotection@communities.gov.uk or Knowledge and Information Access Team, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Fry Building, 2 Marsham Street, London SW1P 4DF.

7. Your personal data will not be sent overseas.

8. Your personal data will not be used for any automated decision making.

9. Your personal data will be stored in a secure government IT system.

We use a third-party system, Citizen Space, to collect consultation responses. In the first instance your personal data will be stored on their secure UK-based server. Your personal data will be transferred to our secure government IT system as soon as possible, and it will be stored there for two years before it is deleted.

1. [Estimates of the population for England and Wales - Office for National Statistics](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/estimatesofthepopulationforenglandandwales)
(<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/estimatesofthepopulationforenglandandwales>)
2. [Regional gross domestic product: all ITL regions - Office for National Statistics](https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossdomesticproductgdp/datasets/regionalgrossdomesticproductallnutslevelregions)
(<https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossdomesticproductgdp/datasets/regionalgrossdomesticproductallnutslevelregions>)
3. ONS 2024
4. [Our economy - Gatwick Diamond](https://investgatwickdiamond.co.uk/our-economy/) (<https://investgatwickdiamond.co.uk/our-economy/>)
5. [Thales in England - Thales Group](https://www.thalesgroup.com/en/countries/europe/united-kingdom/about-thales-uk/regional-presence/thales-england) (<https://www.thalesgroup.com/en/countries/europe/united-kingdom/about-thales-uk/regional-presence/thales-england>)
6. <https://www.sussexbay.org.uk/> (<https://www.sussexbay.org.uk/>)
7. [East Sussex - Sussex visitor economy](https://democracy.eastsussex.gov.uk/documents/s39574/LME%2012%20November%202021%20Sussex%20Tourism%20and%20Culture%20Recovery%20Group%20Progress%20Appendix%203.pdf)
(<https://democracy.eastsussex.gov.uk/documents/s39574/LME%2012%20November%202021%20Sussex%20Tourism%20and%20Culture%20Recovery%20Group%20Progress%20Appendix%203.pdf>)
8. Ibid.

9. [Brighton & Hove Economic Evidence - BHCC \(https://democracy.brighton-hove.gov.uk/documents/s202983/An%20Economic%20Plan%20for%20Brighton%20Hove%202024-27%20APX.%20n%203%20-%20Evidence%20Base.pdf\)](https://democracy.brighton-hove.gov.uk/documents/s202983/An%20Economic%20Plan%20for%20Brighton%20Hove%202024-27%20APX.%20n%203%20-%20Evidence%20Base.pdf)
10. [WineGB-Industry-Report-2022-23-FINAL-4.pdf \(https://winegb.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/WineGB-Industry-Report-2022-23-FINAL-4.pdf\)](https://winegb.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/WineGB-Industry-Report-2022-23-FINAL-4.pdf)
11. [Sussex Wine Tourism: A Plan for Growth - Sussex Modern \(https://sussexmodern.org.uk/sussexwinetourism/\)](https://sussexmodern.org.uk/sussexwinetourism/)
12. Based on O2 Motion mobile phone data, anonymised and aggregated by O2 and expanded to represent the UK population. Statistic is for total weekday journeys in 2022-2023.
13. [Regional gross value added \(balanced\) per head and income components - Office for National Statistics \(https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossvalueaddedgva/datasets/nominalregionalgrossvalueaddedbalancedperheadandincomecomponents/current\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossvalueaddedgva/datasets/nominalregionalgrossvalueaddedbalancedperheadandincomecomponents/current)
14. [Regional and subregional labour productivity, UK - Office for National Statistics \(https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/economicoutputandproductivity/productivitymeasures/bulletins/regionalandsubregionallabourproductivityuk/latest\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/economicoutputandproductivity/productivitymeasures/bulletins/regionalandsubregionallabourproductivityuk/latest); [East Sussex in Figures – Data Observatory – Economic performance \(September 2024\) \(https://www.eastsussexinfigures.org.uk/economic-performance-in-brief/\)](https://www.eastsussexinfigures.org.uk/economic-performance-in-brief/)
15. [Industrial Strategy - The South East Local Enterprise Partnership \(https://www.southeastlep.com/app/uploads/2023/02/Sussex-LIS-2023.pdf\)](https://www.southeastlep.com/app/uploads/2023/02/Sussex-LIS-2023.pdf)
16. [About - Future Skills Sussex \(https://www.futureskillssussex.co.uk/about#|sip-reports\)](https://www.futureskillssussex.co.uk/about#|sip-reports)
17. [UK House Price Index England: November 2024 - GOV.UK \(https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-house-price-index-for-november-2024/uk-house-price-index-england-november-2024\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-house-price-index-for-november-2024/uk-house-price-index-england-november-2024)
18. [Deprivation - Joint Strategic Needs Assessment \(https://www.eastsussexjsna.org.uk/topics/our-population/deprivation/\)](https://www.eastsussexjsna.org.uk/topics/our-population/deprivation/)
19. [https://jsna.westsussex.gov.uk/assets/pdf/WS_JSNA_Summary_2024_2025.pdf \(https://jsna.westsussex.gov.uk/assets/pdf/WS_JSNA_Summary_2024_2025.pdf\)](https://jsna.westsussex.gov.uk/assets/pdf/WS_JSNA_Summary_2024_2025.pdf)

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Appendix 2 of Appendix A

Response from East Sussex County Council to the consultation on establishing a Mayoral Combined County Authority across East Sussex, West Sussex and Brighton and Hove

Question 1: To what extent do you agree or disagree that establishing a Mayoral Combined County Authority over the proposed geography will deliver benefits to the area?

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strongly agree X

- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

We agree that establishing a Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA) over the proposed geography will deliver benefits to the area for our residents, businesses and visitors to Sussex and although containing many contrasting communities and places, Sussex is an entity people identify with and generates a sense of belonging.

The proposed Sussex geography contains a mix of rural, urban and coastal areas and in determining future considerations it will be important that the delivery of benefits are spread appropriately across the whole extent of the geography amongst areas where there are (i) current or emerging growth and equally (ii) into areas where there are pockets of deprivation to address barriers and unlock their full potential for growth.

We welcome the proposed MCCA powers, functions and funding that would be made available from Government and see these as helping to address existing known barriers and unlock potential within the area enabling the economy to grow.

A Sussex MCCA will positively elevate the voice of Sussex to be heard at a national level across key departments with the representation of an appointed Mayor on both the Council of Nations and Regions chaired by the Prime Minister alongside the Mayoral Council chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister. This will benefit the proposed

geography and deliver benefits to the area with the potential to unlock further powers, functions and funding.

MCCAs will allow for a strategic and joined up level of place-making to be undertaken, which is currently lacking across Sussex. Alongside the introduction of Spatial Development Strategies (SDS), the establishment of an MCCA will allow for a consistency of decision making on critical planning matters (e.g. distribution of growth) and how key infrastructure needs to support such growth can be planned for, prioritised, funded and delivered. This has been lacking with the current system where, in spite of the principles around Duty to Co-Operate, Local Plans across an area often do not align with one another and decisions on where investment is directed to support that growth can be inconsistent across authority areas.

Difficult decisions, particularly in relation to how unmet housing need from one area could be met in another, have often not been satisfactorily resolved. The introduction of the SDS at the MCCA level should significantly improve this situation.

Question 2: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed governance arrangements for the mayoral Combined County Authority?

- Strongly agree

- Agree **X**

- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

We agree with the proposal that the Constituent councils are the County Councils of East and West Sussex and the Brighton and Hove City Council and the governance arrangements subject to the following:

- I. The Council considers that consideration be given to voting being weighted having regard to the proportion of population that the constituent councils each represent.

- II. The Council also does not support the proposed name. The area covered by the MCCA is Sussex, of which the three constituent authorities are all part. There is no basis or rationale to single out not just one part of the area, but one part of one of the constituent Members. To do so risks disenfranchising and diminishing the status of other key areas in Sussex and undermining joint working. The fact is that the area covered by the MCCA is Sussex, there is no basis for specifying particular areas of the Constituent Authorities. We strongly believe the name of the MCCA should be Sussex.
- III. The Council is supportive of the ability to have non-constituent and associate members but does not consider that these should be limited to six, and it should be at the discretion of the constituent members of the MCCA to reflect the local area and its make up.
- IV. Clarity is also sought in relation to transitional arrangements. The Consultation document sets out that functions will be transferring from local authorities and detailed confirmation is needed about exact changes so we can ensure they are appropriate and practical and ensure clarity of responsibilities and accountabilities. This is particularly important in relation to staff and contracts.
- V. Confirmation is sought in relation to how the costs of establishing the MCCA will be met.

Question 3: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through the Mayoral Combined County Authority will support the economy of the area?

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strongly agree X

- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

We agree that working across the proposed geography through the MCCA will benefit the economy of the area. We see this as an opportunity for the area to have a greater say/control in decision making at a sub-regional and local levels over the responsibilities for transport/infrastructure, adult education/skills and employment programmes, housing and strategic planning, economic development and regeneration that will all contribute to driving economic growth and social well-being.

As explained in section 3 of the consultation, we can see the value of working across the proposed geography as each of the discipline/subject areas will be supported with the release of powers, functions and funding responsibilities that will help address the known barriers to development and investment across the area.

We would like to elaborate on each of the discipline/areas separately in how we see them supporting the economy of the area as set out below.

Transport and Local Infrastructure

Welcome the potential establishment of a wider Local Transport Authority (LTA) covering the Sussex area. Although there are close working relationships and collaboration between the existing LTAs on their respective transport plans, the responsibility for an area wide Local Transport Plan (LTP) sitting with the MCCA will further enhance this and enable greater co-ordinated planning of transport infrastructure and services within and between travel to work/learn/visit areas by all modes, including public transport, rail and road based journeys. It will also complement the requirement of the spatial development strategy (SDS) for Sussex and Brighton, ensuring greater linkages between transport and land use planning across the geography, and support a transport infrastructure first approach. Further clarity is required on the interaction between the MCCA's wider LTP and the unitary authorities in relation to their local implementation plans for transport.

We also welcome the simplification and consolidation of local transport funding. At present, funding for transport infrastructure and services - active travel, bus services and infrastructure (via Bus Service improvement Plans) and integrated transport - is received by LTAs in a piecemeal fashion, often only one or two years and with a spend time limit, often competitive (with the risk of abortive work) and received at different times during the financial year. The receipt of this ad-hoc funding makes planning the development and delivery of a co-ordinated transport infrastructure and services programme very difficult to manage. Consolidating and devolving funding for transport infrastructure and services over multiple years, and over a wider geography means investment can be planned more effectively and efficiently, and the devolved funding as well as Community Infrastructure Levy monies can be targeted at the right transport interventions and services, alongside any additional funding from the proposed 30 Year Investment Fund, that meet the needs of the communities of Sussex and Brighton and the priorities of the MCCA LTP.

Welcome opportunity for more formal partnerships with National Highways, the rail industry and Active Travel England. At present, the engagement with these organisations is sporadic and as local transport authorities we have little say in the investment priorities of strategic transport providers in our authority area. Whilst our strategic transport priorities are articulated in our LTP4 and through Transport for the South East's Transport Strategy & Strategic Investment Plan, having a greater say and a strategic co-ordinating role through, for example, the establishment of a Key Road Network (KRN) and enhanced partnerships with strategic transport partners – National Highways, Great British Railways - across the wider Sussex geography is supported.

Major capital infrastructure and local growth delivery

We welcome the opportunity for longer-term funding certainty which can act as a catalyst for more joined up major infrastructure and local economic growth investment across the wider MCCA geography. Developing a deliverable pipeline of major infrastructure and local growth projects is complex and challenging and can take many years to come to fruition, and longer still to achieve the full value once delivered. Devolving funding for those larger-scale infrastructure improvements in a way that is consistent with the Key Road Network could lead to improved value for money delivery frameworks, a consistent approach to attracting and retaining people with the necessary skills, and clearer objectives to ensure the needs of people and communities are met.

Skills and Employment

The current skills and employment funding landscape is complex due to government-set criteria for funded programmes. These programmes often lack flexibility to address local economic priorities and job availability. This issue has been highlighted in the pan-Sussex Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIP) and in the priorities set by our established and highly effective Skills East Sussex board.

Working across the proposed geography through the MCCA for employment and skills will support the area's economy. Local areas possess an understanding of their economies and can tailor programmes to address specific needs, focusing on growth and emerging sectors. The proposed powers, functions, and funding responsibilities would enable collaboration in addressing local priorities and demands in key economic growth sectors and skills shortages via consolidated skills and employment support funding. Additionally, continuing to collaborate with partners and jointly managing the LSIP with employer representative bodies will further strengthen relationships with stakeholder partners.

The proposed MCCA would be well-positioned to advance the objectives outlined in the Get Britain Working plan to reduce economic inactivity, promote integration and innovation within local health, work, and skills provision, set the strategic direction for skills provision and opportunities for 16-19 year-olds that support their future employment.

Economic Development and Regeneration

We agree that the MCCA will play a key role in attracting investment into Sussex and Brighton and supporting business growth. We see this as an opportunity to strengthen and deepen our productive relationships with Government departments with investment into our key growth corridors in East Sussex (Hastings/ Bexhill; Lewes/Newhaven and around the A22 Wealden/Polegate and Eastbourne areas) with programmes that can support existing/established businesses and also to design and deliver programmes that will create critical mass across our rural areas, such as our proposed “Innovation Animateurs” programme.

As an example, we already run a successful East Sussex Growth Hub service and we want to continue that relationship with government and local business to enable them to access the required business support services and funding they need to grow, be more productive/innovative, boost exports and encourage responsible investment into the county and across Sussex (see East Sussex Prosperity 2025 – 2050). With the opportunity for greater funding certainty through the MCCA and particularly the 30-year investment fund – we envisage there would be opportunities working with our other partners to consider prioritising spend on interventions that will support and grow the economy of the area. We are also of the view that the MCCA will be in a key position to take a more holistic approach to investing for economic growth across the piece.

Cultural Strategy

The cultural sector in East Sussex has grown considerably in recent years. Through our Cultural Strategy, and our work with the established Culture East Sussex board and the South East Creative Economy Network, significant investment in our cultural assets for example Towner Eastbourne and Towner in the Seven Sisters (known currently as Black Robin Farm), the Devonshire Creative Quarter in Eastbourne, Charleston, Lewes and the De La Warr Pavillion in Bexhill, England’s Creative Coast has been made.

We have already delivered two key creative industry support programmes – the current Create Growth programme is a partnership across all of Sussex - and the formation of an MCCA will provide significant opportunity to enhance and deepen that work.

Tourism

The East Sussex, Brighton & Hove and West Sussex Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) secured accreditation in 2024. The LVEP covers the proposed MCCA area. This collaboration has allowed us to develop a Sussex brand, in particular, supporting our visibility to potential international visitors. Gatwick Airport and

Newhaven Port serve as critical access routes to our tourism hotspots attracting international visitors to our county and Sussex.

We now have a growing visitor economy and have recently launched an East and West Sussex destination Management organisation: Experience Sussex which works in partnership with Brighton & Hove to deliver the LVEP Strategy for Growth – which aims to grow our visitor economy value from £5bn to £7.5bn.

Given the above level of cross-boundary working, the formulation of an MCCA can only be seen as enhancing work across Sussex in tourism, hospitality and the visitor economy.

As a result of the above, having a deeper and closer collaboration with the Government's DCMS and with key arm's length bodies (Visit England/Visit Britain, Arts Council England and Historic England) through the MCCA will provide opportunities to attract much needed private and public investment. This will stimulate growth in terms of job numbers and GVA into these growing sectors in our economy and enable a shared approach to developing the skilled workforce required to support these sectors.

Question 4: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through the Mayoral Combined County Authority will improve social outcomes in the area

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strongly agree X
--

- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

We strongly agree that the Mayoral Combined County Authority will improve social outcomes across Sussex. The support provided by the MCCA for a more inclusive, accessible and local economy and to strengthen local communities, which will result in better social outcomes for residents across Sussex.

The MCCA will support local economic growth, access to skills and will improve transport across the area, all of which will provide greater opportunities and access to better paid jobs.

The ambition of the Spatial Development Strategy to support the building of new homes will help in relation to the lack of access to affordable housing in the area, which will have a positive impact on social outcomes.

The proposed duty of Mayoral Combined Authorities in relation to health improvement and health inequalities, will mean that this will form a core consideration in relation to decisions that are taken which should lead to improved social outcomes for residents.

Question 5: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through a Mayoral Combined County Authority will improve local government services in the area?

- Strongly agree

- Agree

- Neither agree nor disagree

- Disagree

- Strongly disagree

- Don't know

- Prefer not to say

We agree that working across the proposed Sussex geography through an MCCA will improve local government services. So as not to repeat our responses again (particularly on questions 1 and 3) they can be summarised as:

- The ability to make a spatial plan across a wider area should enable more timely delivery of housing and infrastructure
- The potential to simplify associated local government funding, by reducing/removing competitive bidding for limited funding, with the potential for multi-year financial settlements from Government
- Better integration of other public services e.g. boundaries of other strategic organisations to be coterminous with those of a Sussex MCCA including Police and NHS Integrated Care System.
- Has triggered potential for fast track local government reorganisation, with opportunity to deliver transformed and integrated services as well as better value for money.

Question 6: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through a Mayoral Combined County Authority will improve the local natural environment and overall national environment?

- Strongly agree

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Agree X |
|--|

- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

There is already good cross-boundary working across Sussex when it comes to natural environment matters but the MCCA will provide an opportunity to further strengthen it. The two Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) for Sussex are being prepared in a coordinated manner, with shared stakeholder engagement, commissioning of evidence and mapping. This work, along with other areas of work centred on the natural environment, is supported by the Sussex Local Nature Partnership, which operates across the proposed MCCA area. All of this reflects the reality that natural environment matters are not constrained by administrative boundaries (e.g. the High Weald National Landscape covers significant parts of both East and West Sussex and the South Down National Park and even wider area). Given this level of cross-boundary working, the formulation of an MCCA can enhance work across Sussex on the natural environment. It should ensure that investment is directed to priority areas/projects and we would hope to see that the MCCA could be a key player when it comes to implementing aspects of the two LNRSs.

Question 7: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through the Mayoral Combined County Authority will support the interest of local communities and reflect local identities

- Strongly agree

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Agree X
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- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

This will be a key success measure for the MCCA and the Mayor in particular given the large and differing geography across Sussex which already has a strong sense of the separate identities of East Sussex and West Sussex and the City. These differences are reflected in the nature of the land, geology, history, demography, economies and traditions. The differences as well as the similarities and common objectives will need to be celebrated and recognised. Experience and learning from elsewhere, as well as the councils' experience of working together and with Sussex partners on joint issues, demonstrates it can be done but it will need close attention and effort both in creating the MCCA and how it, especially the Mayor, operates.